

REMARKS

Reconsideration of this application is respectfully requested in view of the foregoing amendment and the following remarks.

Claims 2, 5-9, and 17-29 were pending in this application. In this Amendment, Applicants have amended claims 2, 5, and 6, and canceled claims 17-20 without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter thereof. Accordingly, claims 2, 5-9, and 21-29 will be pending upon entry of this Amendment.

In the Office Action mailed January 13, 2006, the Examiner rejected claim 18 under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 5,483,876 to Davis ("Davis"). The Examiner also rejected claims 2 and 17-20 (believed to be mistakenly listed in the Office Action as 17-21) under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over the combination of German Patent DE 9417837 to Muller ("Muller") and Davis and the combination of Muller and U.S. Patent No. 4,509,638 to Kato ("Kato"). The Examiner also rejected claim 5 under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Muller in view of Davis and U.S. Patent No. 3,958,740 to Dixon.

The Examiner also allowed claims 21 and 24-29 and indicated that claims 6-9 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of their base claim and any intervening claims. Applicants acknowledge with thanks this allowance and indication of allowable subject matter. Accordingly, Applicants have amended claim 6 to include all of the limitations of its base claim 17, and have canceled claim 17. In addition, Applicants have amended claims 2 and 5 to depend from amended claim 6. Applicants therefore respectfully submit that amended claim 6 is in condition for allowance, and that dependent claims 2, 5, 7-9, 22, and 23 are also allowable due at least to their dependence from an allowable base claim.

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Applicants have also canceled claims 18-20 without prejudice or disclaimer of the subject matter thereof, thereby rendering moot the rejections of those claims.

In view of the foregoing, all of the pending claims in this case are believed to be in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner have any questions or determine that any further action is desirable to place this application in even better condition for issue, the Examiner is encouraged to telephone Applicants' undersigned representative at the number listed below.

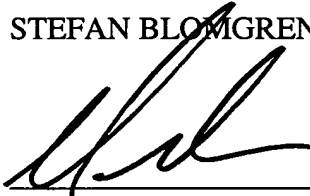
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Date: April 13, 2006

Respectfully submitted,

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